

akin to not including a major form of treatment such as a surgical procedure when Medicare was established in 1965. It is absolutely unthinkable. Too many seniors lack dependable drug coverage and their health is being compromised. I am committed to providing Medicare coverage for prescription drugs, and promise to continue fighting for America's seniors. The Congress must move forward expeditiously to adopt legislation to accomplish this important objective.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FITZGERALD). The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. ROTH. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. ROTH and Mr. MOYNIHAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2277 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2284

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I understand that S. 2284, introduced earlier today by Senator DASCHLE, and others, is at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill for the first time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2284) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. I thank the always generous clerk.

I now ask for its second reading and object to my own request on behalf of the other side.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. If the distinguished Chair understands that, he understands more than I do. But the matter is now concluded. Once again, I suggest the absence of a quorum. And thank Heaven for Mr. Dove.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, what is the business before the Senate?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business.

Mr. GORTON. With any time limitations?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are none.

#### PIPELINE SAFETY

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, last week the city of Bellingham was the site of a Senate field hearing on pipeline safety. This hearing comes after the unspeakable tragedy that took place when three young boys were killed after a gasoline pipeline exploded in Bellingham on June 10.

I want to share with you my thoughts from the hearing and outline future congressional action as the Senate Commerce Committee prepares to reauthorize the Office of Pipeline Safety this year.

Unfortunately, my Senate Commerce Committee colleagues were unable to attend last Monday's hearing in Bellingham, but I believe the committee has no greater priority than to making sure the pipelines running underneath our schools, neighborhoods, churches, and senior centers are safe.

Pipeline safety concerns aren't unique to Washington. We're seeing States such as Texas, Wisconsin, Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania respond to various local pipeline issues from oil spills and leaks to siting battles. In the last decade, there were 3,917 liquid fuel spills and natural gas leaks, averaging roughly one per day. These accidents resulted in 201 deaths, close to 3,000 injuries and \$778 million in property damage. And for the first time, a National Pipeline Safety Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. next month.

Though the sacrifice is one that no family and no community should have to make, the tragedy in Bellingham would be even worse if we did not learn from it and apply those lessons to try to prevent other accidents. To this end, last week's hearing was invaluable.

While the cause of the explosion remains under investigation, here's what we do know:

We know that many people in Bellingham were unaware that a pipeline was even running through their neighborhood.

We know that the Office of Pipeline Safety ignored enhanced safety requirements, including increased inspections inside pipes, in highly populated and environmentally sensitive areas as Congress required in 1992 and 1996.

We learned that cities through which the Olympic Pipelines Company line runs have tremendous concerns with the integrity of the pipelines, and have had problems getting information and cooperation from the company.

We know that the National Transportation Safety Board has criticized OPS for its poor record of responding to NTSB recommendations. NTSB Chairman Jim Hall has even said, "There's no indication that the Office of Pipeline Safety is in charge or that its regulations, its inspections, its assets, its staffing and its spirit are adequate to the task."

We know that right now, the power to oversee and regulate the safety of the millions of miles of pipelines running underneath our communities rests with the federal Office of Pipeline Safety under the supervision of the Department of Transportation. And in the case of implementing pipeline safety standards in Washington State they have failed miserably.

We learned that only a handful of States have the power to implement tougher safety standards, and when States are given this authority, their safety record is equal if not greater to that of OPS.

So, where does this leave us?

State government, local government, and citizen groups in Washington State were quick to answer the wake-up call from Bellingham and examine what they could do to improve pipeline safety. What they found was that while there are significant actions Washington can take to prevent and respond to accidents, such as improving the State's call-before-you-dig requirements, increasing public awareness, and training emergency response personnel, there is a lot the state cannot do with respect to prescribing safety standards because Federal law pre-empts state regulations.

Today is already March 23. We know this is going to be a short legislative year. Many will say we won't have the time to address this issue this year. I disagree. Congress is due to reauthorize the Office of Pipelines Safety and we've been told the administration will submit its proposal to Congress any day now.

Senator MURRAY and I are supporting legislation to give states greater authority in adopting tougher pipeline safety standards. Given the Office of Pipelines Safety's failure to make pipeline safety a priority, its reluctance to cede any authority to states, I feel we must move forward.

When I asked both the Office of Pipeline Safety and the NTSB last week to take a position on our pipeline legislation, the answer was less than clear. After listening to the painful and damaging testimony that scoured OPS's safety record and failure to comply with congressionally-mandated safety requirements, I was speechless at their unwillingness to relinquish oversight authority to the states. The State of Washington, the people of Bellingham and communities along the pipeline route are ready and capable of implementing tougher safety standards. I demand OPS to take a firm position on this pipeline legislation.

I also request that my good friend and colleague, Senator JOHN MCCAIN, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, schedule a vote on the various pipeline safety proposals.

As I have said before, this pipeline legislation may not be perfect, and I believe we need to do some more listening before we arrive at the final pipeline safety proposal. NTSB officials highlighted the complexities of regulating pipelines that pass through a